

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 8, 2018

The Honorable Wilbur L. Ross, Jr.
Secretary of Commerce
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Ross:

We write to express our serious concerns with the inclusion of a citizenship question on the 2020 Census. This unnecessary effort risks a substantial undercount of Michigan residents in 2020, with wide ranging implications for our state.

The U.S. Constitution requires a census of all persons residing in the United States every ten years. The census serves as the basis for critical elements of our democracy, ensuring that every person can be represented. Census data also determines the distribution of over \$675 billion in federal funding annually, including over \$14 billion in the state of Michigan for Medicare and Medicaid, education, highway planning and construction, foster care, school lunches, and other essential services. Without an accurate census, our communities will be deprived of equal representation and vital resources.

The State of Michigan has a history of maintaining a good response rate to the census. In 2010, the mail response rate was 78%, the sixth best in the United States. However, many areas in Michigan are “hard to count,” with low initial response rates. Community outreach and public trust are essential to an accurate count in these areas and throughout our state.

On March 26, 2018, the Department of Commerce announced that it would add an unprecedented, unnecessary, and untested question to the 2020 Census form, asking the citizenship status of every person in America. After years of careful testing for the 2020 Census to ensure a full count, the sudden inclusion of this question undermines the trust of our diverse communities and will likely reduce response rates significantly.

Current Census Bureau advisers, former Census Bureau Directors and Secretaries of Commerce, and countless community advocates have warned that including this question will reduce response rates. The Census Bureau’s Scientific Advisory Committee recently expressed its concerns about the “lack of adequate testing,” “implications for nonresponse,” and “concerns about confidentiality.”

In the current environment of fear and hostility, including this Administration’s aggressive anti-immigrant agenda, this question raises concerns among our immigrant communities and U.S. citizens. This question only exacerbates fear and mistrust, jeopardizing an accurate count and putting all our communities at risk.

We are committed to a fair and accurate count of our constituents, in Michigan and across the United States. We ask that you focus on the goal of conducting a comprehensive, accurate, and cost-effective 2020 Census by removing the citizenship question.

We appreciate your timely consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Brenda Lawrence", written over a horizontal line.

Brenda L. Lawrence

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sander Levin", written over a horizontal line.

Sander M. Levin

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Daniel T. Kildee", written over a horizontal line.

Daniel T. Kildee

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Debbie Dingell", written over a horizontal line.

Debbie Dingell